

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicant would like to thank the Examiner for the careful consideration given the present application. The application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action, and amended as necessary to more clearly and particularly describe the subject matter that Applicant regards as the invention.

Review of the subject application in view of the present amendment/remarks is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2004/0235539 to Ohta (hereinafter "Ohta") in view of U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0211874 to Mizuta et al. (hereinafter "Mizuta").

With regard to claim 1, the Examiner's rejection is considered moot in light of applicant's amendments. Claim 1 has been amended to recite that a voice control unit inhibits signal transmission from the voice input section to the voice output section and signal transmission from the voice input section to the communication section for muting not only if the first and second cabinets are in a transition state from the closed state to the open state but also if the first and second cabinets are in a transition state from the open state to the closed state based on output of the positional relation sensing unit. This limitation of claim 1 no longer reads on Ohta and, therefore, the rejection must be withdrawn.

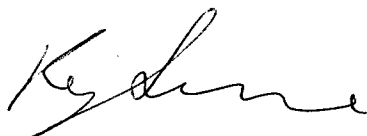
With regard to claim 2, the Office action incorrectly asserts that Ohta discloses the limitation "the voice control unit continues the muting for a predetermined time period from the point in time when the first and second cabinets enter the open state or the closed state from the transition state." Applicant agrees that FIG. 7 and paragraph 0051 describe that the controller detects whether the top lid is open or whether a predetermined time has elapsed. It is asked,

however, how such a discussion discloses the above mentioned limitation. If the top lid were open in S705, this would result in a stoppage, rather than a continuation, of the muting processing in S709. If the top lid were not open in S705, meaning that the motor is still operating and the top lid is still being opened, this would continue the muting processing of S703 but the above limitation would still not be disclosed because the first and second cabinets did not enter the open state (the top lid is still being opened and has not reached a fully opened state) or the closed state (the procedures S307 through S317 relate to opening of the top lid and thus the closed state cannot be reached) as required by claim 2. Therefore, the rejection of claim 2 was improper and must be withdrawn.

In light of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance and notice to that effect is hereby requested. If it is determined that the application is not in condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to initiate a telephone interview with the undersigned attorney to expedite prosecution of the present application.

If there are any additional fees resulting from this communication, please charge same to our Deposit Account No.: 16-0820, our Order No.: NGB-40213.

Respectfully submitted,
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